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ABSTRACT

Citing five drawbacks to the traditional "sticks and balloons" method of printing used in beginning handwriting instruction, this pamphlet proposes instead the use of the D'Nealian continuous stroke printing method. The pamphlet contains arguments for using the method with learning disabled and dyslexic students, suggestions for developing a D'Nealian program, a discussion of the mechanics of writing, and suggestions for the timing and method for introducing small and capital letters to students. Charts illustrating the differences in the traditional and D'Nealian manuscript methods and showing the relationship between D'Nealian and cursive writing are included. (FL)

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D'NEALIAN MANUSCRIPT

A CONTINUOUS STROKE PRINT

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D'NEALIAN MANUSCRIPT

"A Continuous Stroke Print"

by

Donald N. Thurber

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I extend grateful appreciation to Frank Slubowski, Elementary Principal, Gibraltar School District, for his encouragement, educational leadership and help in letter illustrations. Special thanks to Lenore Wilson, my secretary, who suffered through many rewrites and trials.

Forward

Upon entering first grade the two questions most frequently heard from children, by first grade teachers are: When will we learn to read, followed by when can I write my "A, B, C's".

Typical answers to these questions are: "We're not ready yet, but in a little while we'll learn to read and write", "In a few days or weeks" or "Just as soon as we learn our letters we'll learn to read and write."

At this particular time children are about as highly motivated for school as they will ever be. This desire to come to school and learn to read and write has been building up long before that first day in school. However, in most of our nation's schools, little is done at this time to fully capitalize on this tremendous motivation for reading and writing.

The reason for this is that usual teaching methods tend to treat reading as one separate skill or learning process and penmanship as yet another separate learning process. The result is that neither of these skills draw upon the other to reinforce or help itself thru the complexities of the learning process.

For example, if a child can write early, he quickly establishes left to rightness. This is an important basic understanding in reading development, and is easily established in or by the early writing of words.

Sentence development and basic vocabularies are also established quicker when the words a child hears or speaks can be written by himself. By writing words and sentences penmanship becomes more meaningful and is not just a letter writing exercise, designed to get all children to make letters alike.

When beginning reading and penmanship are then combined, reading and writing both develop faster as the child has two skills working together rather than learning each as unrelated subject matter.

Presently the main drawback in schools to utilizing this improved reading-writing technique is the illogic way we teach children to write. By its own structure and methodology the circle-stick method delays the writing skill beyond the point where it could be most effectively used with initial reading.

This handwriting program is a departure from the traditionally used circle and stick manuscript form of print. When D'Nealian is learned, the learner has at his command the basics needed to write cursively with connected letters. It truly offers a learning skill that develops progressively from one learned part to another.

Reading authorities and curriculum people continually stress the values of the language-arts approach to teaching reading, the place of linquistics in reading, and other language experience needs in reading. However, nearly all neglect to say anything about the method used for writing such material. Educators and teachers, by letting children use an illogical system of penmanship are guilty of wasting children's time and even worse; of slowing beginning reading development.

"Sticks and balloons", as it is sometimes referred to, hinders childrens ability to write for the following five reasons:

First: The circle and stick method of penmanship demands a rigid construction of letter formation. However, penmanship is an individual accomplishment and is as self-oriented as ones own finger prints. No two people write alike.

Second: There is no evidence to support the idea of teaching large one inch letters to start and then gradually over the next year or two reducing the letters to the usual size penmanship print. Children can start with standard size 1/4 inch print as they are fully capable of handling this size letter construction.

Third: 99% of all penmanship methods teach vertical alignment of letters in printing. After a full year or two of this insistency the child when ready for cursive writing must forget vertical print and learn to slant his letters.

Fourth: There is no evidence to support use of large beginning primary pencils.

The fifth illogical teaching point is by far the worst. Rhythm is an essential ingredient in writing effortlessly. In all circle and stick methods, letters are formed with component parts. These breaks in letter formation completely ignore the natural movement of the hand. Children with any perceptual problems are greatly handicapped in trying to match a stick against a circle, without the child's eye misjudging and leaving a space between the two. In reality many so called better writers truly might be called "better drawers."

LEARNING-DISABLED AND DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

(Note: All dyslexic children are learning-disabled children, but not all learning-disabled children are dyslexic.)

All learning-disabled children are terribly handicapped if forced to use circles and sticks. These children must be discovered early by the teacher and given individual attention at their earliest learning experience if they are to be "saved".

Most dyslexic children have "normal" intelligence but have difficulty in decoding or encoding. For this reason great patience and understanding are needed by the teacher in order not to further frustrate or harm the child.

Since D'Nealian is an individual approach to writing, the learning-disadvantaged child has a better chance to succeed in writing, rather than in being forced to write other methods in which defeat is built in from the start.

The built-in defeat comes in the form of component parts, i.e., circles and sticks. Also in that the child is forced to make patterns or letters they are incapable of making with their disability. The "chicken scratches" these children produce are anything but legible though the content of what the child wants to say is there. With proper understanding, guidance, and patience they will come through in time in a more legible fashion. Teachers must remember that one of the main characteristics of a dyslexic child is that they can't pattern or do things in sequential order like the normal child does. The dyslexic child needs a <u>whole approach</u>, the Gestalt theory, rather than component parts.

In using D'Nealian Manuscript the whole letter is developed in a unified or continuous stroke and not in splinter parts. Ninety percent of D'Nealian letters are made without lifting the pencil from the paper. Also about ninety percent is skill-progressed <u>from manuscript to cursive writing</u>. The impossibility of one-hundred percent carry-over is because of the radical difference between lower case manuscript "s" and "f" and cursive "s" and "f". Teachers should use their own judgement as to how they want to present "s" and "f" cursively.

D'Nealian offers strong visual and auditory clues as an aid to the memory process. The "monkey tails", "fish hooks", "humps", and "tummies" are ideographic in make-up thus giving the learner this strong association of visual and auditory clues to help them retain what is presented. A learning-disabled child with a visual-memory problem can use such clues to help them keep straight <u>what goes where</u> in forming letters. By pairing the auditory and visual directions, the chance for distortion will be reduced. This is because the learner can use one or the other modality to positively reinforce the weaker modality.

Run-on lines will also be reduced because the child knows when to stop making a letter. For example, when he says or hears the words "monkey-tail", the learner rounds up the letter as the final stroke.

The above-mentioned aids combined with a continuous stroke in letter formation and the elimination of circle and stick methodology, will greatly help all learning-disabled children in their learning development.

DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM

A unique aspect of learning to print or write is that it most often offers some instant success for the doer. The child achieves this feeling as he begins to feel the thrill of expressing himself. He will also understand that what he does on paper satisfies an ego expectation, i.e., "all kids write and I am writing"; "parents and teachers want us to learn to write"; and reflecting the wish for peer approval, "all kids go to school to learn to read and write". Also as he improves his skills, his manuscript writing closer approximates the end result of success, i.e., cursive writing.

All these coupled together make the learning process in penmanship a very desirable goal to achieve. Teachers must be frequent in their praise, as the child achieves success in making the various letters. Since there are twenty-six lower and twenty-six upper case letters there should be ample time and opportunity for encouragement.

Since the purpose of penmanship is communication there is no rationale to support a definite time for all children to start cursive writing. In fact this author and teacher would not be upset if a student wanted to print during his entire academic career. If communication is the purpose of writing, then either print, cursive, or typewritten material should be perfectly acceptable.

Cursive writing must start only when the child is ready. This readiness is visually apparent to the teacher and child. The criterion for switching to cursive is a mutual understanding or feeling of teacher and student that the student is ready for cursive writing. The criterion also is based on the fact the child will be printing in a legible fashion, with "normal" non-laborious time and effort.

Teachers must remember that there is no exact time when children, as a group, make transition from manuscript to cursive writing. With the proper basis of handwriting which D'Nealian offers, a child will make the transition effortlessly when he is ready.

In grade one, alphabet wall cards should not be strung across the front of the room for opening day of school. Cards are put up as they are presented and worked on by the class. This gives the children a chance to see how the alphabet goes together in final order. It also could be overwhelming as some children find all those symbols a staggering expectation at the beginning stage.

By putting the cards up as they are worked on, the child will be contending with the letters of about the same general make-up - the "around down" letters, then all tall letters, and finally the remaining mid-line letters.

D'Nealian manuscript is a simplified method of teaching children to write. The style of letter formation somewhat resembles an italic script. Basically it requires only pencil and paper for its presentation.

It is highly suited for helping students to write effortlessly and legibly in a short period of time. Part of the reason for this is that D'Nealian manuscript was developed on the premise that writing is an individually controlled effort. By utilizing the individual's talents and not prescribed penmanship patterns, the student begins to write quickly.

A key part of this program is a built-in rhythm in letter formation because of the continuous stroke used in letter formation. This is the same rhythm that is so necessary in later cursive writing. Another part is that the italic script closely resembles letters later used in cursive writing.

D'Nealian manuscript offers the first major changes in presenting or teaching writing in over 50 years. It offers a writing-skill progression that easily develops from manuscript print to cursive writing.

There is: no unlearning from circles and sticks to continuous stroked letters, no unlearning of large one inch sized letters to normal sized letters, no unlearning vertical alignment of writing letters to slant writing, no gross or fine muscle or motor control change due to using oversized pencils then later the smaller standard sized pencils.

A unique feature is a phrased audio presentation of directions to accompany the stroke movements for forming each letter. In using an audio presentation, voice inflection is employed for giving oral directions. Where a stroke is made "up", the teacher raised her voice as she says "up". Where directions say "down", she lowers her voice as she says "down", etc. In this manner the learner uses three of his five principal senses in the learning process. He hears the letter formation, he sees the letter formation and by writing his kinesthetic or tactile powers are involved.

In considering the D'Nealian approach to teaching penmanship, teachers need to be concerned with change and the child as an individual.

Change is needed because past and present methods of teaching penmanship follow or adhers to highly structured patterns. It is inconsistent and illogical to attempt to teach highly structured and precisely written patterns to everyone when writing is such an individually controlled accomplishment. Hours of drill have been wasted in the classroom attempting to get all pupils to follow penmanship patterns alien to the indivuality of writing.

This does not mean that we shouldn't teach penmanship as a skill, nor does it mean that we don't have drills. Early elementary teachers, Kindergarten through Third, should spend about twenty minutes a day for handwriting practice. This time is spent in the instruction and observation of children learning to write.

Teachers should not pull apart everything that is wrong with a child's paper but strive to eliminate one or two problem areas every practice session. A paper with too many corrections is only frustrating.

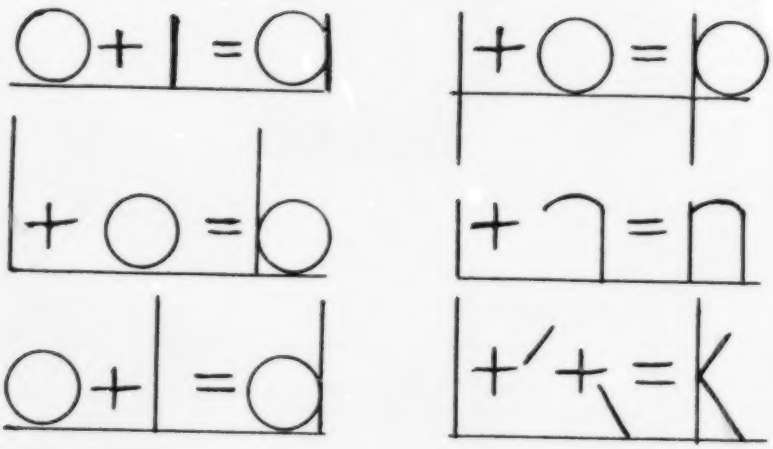
Teachers should not hesitate to occassionally return papers to be rewritten. This is especially true for handwriting in other subject areas. By doing this the teacher is telling the child that acceptable, legible writing is necessary in all work, not just during penmanship development periods.

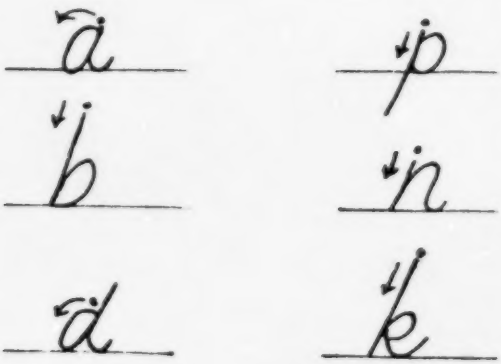
This becomes very important in later elementary grades where handwriting is the main tool used for self-expression. For less verbal children penmanship is a critical skill. Neat writing will help the visual learner as it gives the student the ability to keep accurate communication and records. Practice <u>is</u> needed for improvement, but the emphasis needs to swing towards the concept of individuality.

This is what D'Nealian penmanship is about. It takes the conformity and illogic out of teaching penmanship. It allows the student to proceed at his learning pace and maximize his individuality in the accomplishment of writing. To fully implement this individuality let us look at what is wrong with the usual methods of teaching penmanship.

First, manuscript has been taught with a combination of circles and vertical lines, sometimes referred to as the circle-stick method. This involves joining together either a circle or a straight line to form a letter. In doing this, the writing implement must be lifted from the paper. This involves a high degree of hand-eye coordination that children often lack in their early physical development. Children with even minimum perception problems may well be handicapped by using circles and sticks, or component parts, to form letters. It is contradictory to teach children, for a year or two, to form separate letters by putting together parts, then, to turn around in cursive writing and use in letter formation, a continuous stroke to form a letter. D'Nealian manuscript letters are formed in one continuous movement. This eliminates the "picking the pencil up" to form component parts of a single letter. It also helps the child, from the start, to develop a <u>flowing stroke</u>.

A typical stick and circle method is shown on the next page with the same letters illustrated in D'Nealian Manuscript.





Here are the same letters in illustration one, but these are made with D'Nealian Manuscript. Only one continuous stroke is utilized in all letter formations. Letters start at the dot.

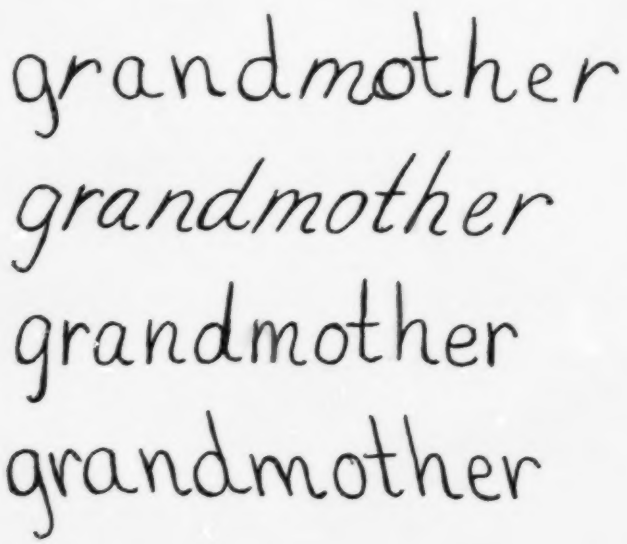
Second, all present manuscript-teaching lacks rhythm. An essential ingredient of good writing is the rhythmatic flow necessary to form letters effortlessly. Letters should not have breaks or be choppy in construction. In the circle-stick methods, three quarters of the letters show a break in formation of the symbol. In present manuscript methods there is no teaching of rhythm as is expected later in cursive writing. This does not show good logic!! In D'Nealian, since all letters are made in continuous movement, rhythm is built in, just as it is later in cursive writing.

A third inconsistency is found in the slant of writing. We have been teaching children in beginning printing to print vertically. After a full year or two of this vertical insistency, we then change and demand a slant for cursive letter formation.

It is reasonable to assume that if a person can be taught to print vertically, as in circle stick methods, a person can just as easily be taught to slant letters from the start. By slanting letters at the start there develops a skill progression for later cursive writing. Presently there is little skill carry-over when one must unlearn vertical alignment of print for the slant of cursive writing.

An important part of D'Nealian Manuscript teaches the child to slant letters from the start. Manuscript letters are presented with typical right slant. However, because of individuality, some children may not develop a right hand slant. Some may print vertically or with a back hand slant. It will be found that most children easily develop the right hand slant, as this is the way they most often see cursive and manuscript writing. Teachers must insist, that which ever way the individual slants, he must be consistent in that slant. The following chart illustrates that legibility cannot develop if letters are randomly slanted.

ILLUSTRATION THREE



D'Nealian penmanship strives to eliminate the foremen-tioned inconsistencies. This penmanship program also develops a formation of symbol structure that leads quickly into cursive writing. With the addition of an "up the hill" or "over the hill" stroke the transition is made and most manuscript letters can be turned into cursive symbols. A few letters will not fit the pattern entirely because of the total difference between the manuscript symbol and its cursive counterpart. It will be noticed in letter formation (Chart 1) that the cursive symbols are easily seen in the D'Nealian Manuscript letters.

CHART OF MANUSCRIPT-CURSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Chart 1 - FROM MANUSCRIPT TO CURSIVE WRITING CHANGE IE EFFECTED WITH "UP-HILL" OR "OVER-THE HILL" STROKES. COMPLETING STROKES ARE MADE AS NEEDED AND REQUIRE NO EXTENSIVE TEACHING OR DIRECTION. WHEN A CHILD CAN PRINT IN A LEGIBLE FASHION, THAT IS, LETTERS ARE SIZED, SPACED, AND SLANTED AS THEY SHOULD BE, HE CAN THEN, IF DESIRED, SWITCH EFFORTLESSLY TO CURSIVE WRITING.

up-hill stroke

over-the-hill stroke

D'Nealian Manuscript	+ Added Stroke	= Cursive	D'Nealian Manuscript	+ Added Stroke	= Cursive
a	↷	a	n	↷	n
b	↗	b	o	↷	o
c	↷	c	p	↗	p
d	↷	d	q	↷	q
e	↗	e	r	↗	r
f	—	—	s	—	—
g	↷	g	t	↗	t
h	↗	h	u	↗	u
i	↗	i	v	↷	v
j	↗	j	w	↗	w
k	↗	k	x	↷	x
l	↗	l	y	↷	y
m	↷	m	z	↷	z

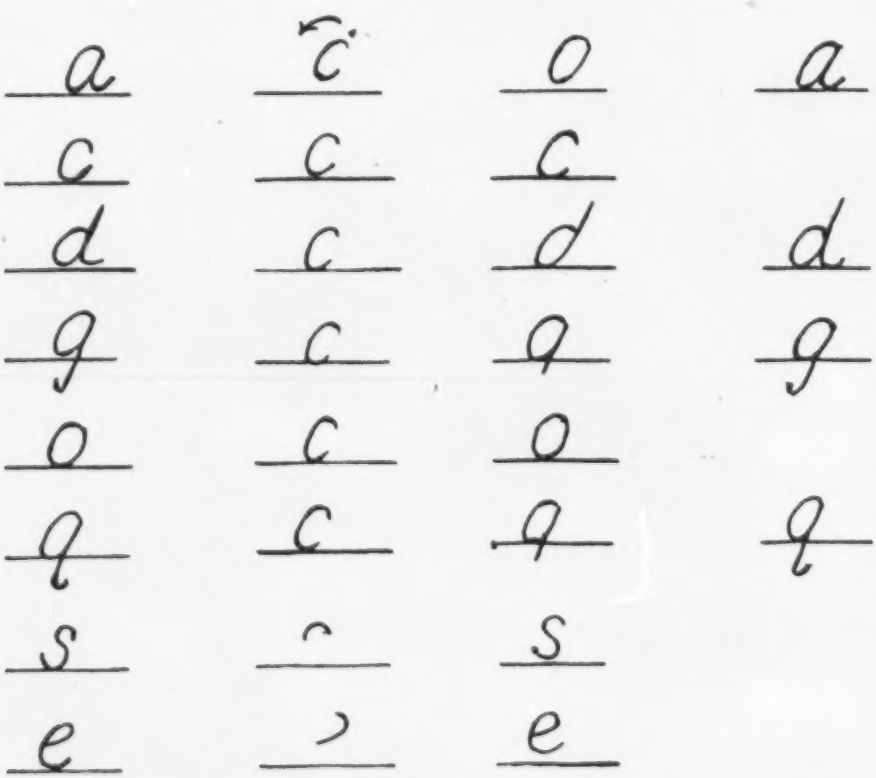
PRESENTATION OF SMALL LETTERS

In introducing manuscript to the children, the letters are presented in groups of similar make-up. They are presented as fast as the teacher sees the group or individual writing them in a legible fashion.

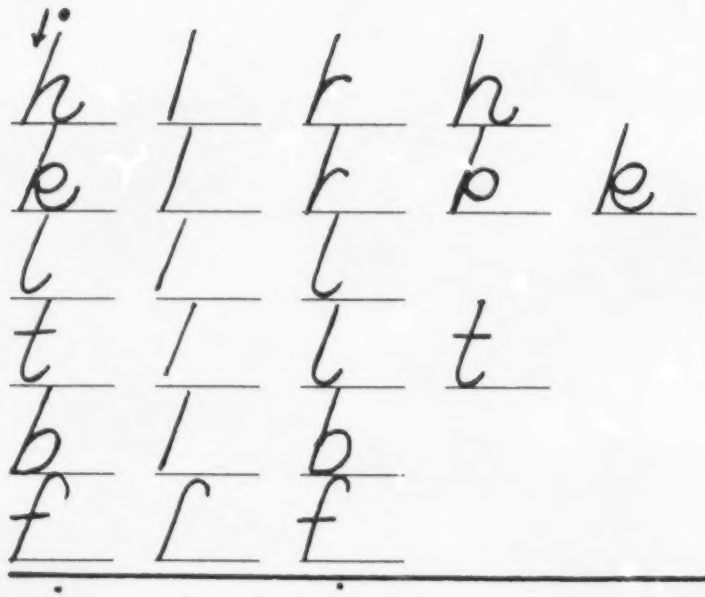
The manuscript alphabet needn't be taught in alphabetical order. Alphabetical order, if desired, is introduced after the children have achieved some mastering of the individual letters in their groupings. However, the teacher should occasionally mention alphabetical order and its usefulness to us.

Letters a, c, d, e, g, q, o, and s, are presented in series as one similar group. These letters all begin at the same point and have the same rhythm likeness. They also have the same beginning audio directions; "around down". This is not entirely true for letter "e", however after the curved line is made, "e" fits the pattern of the other letters.

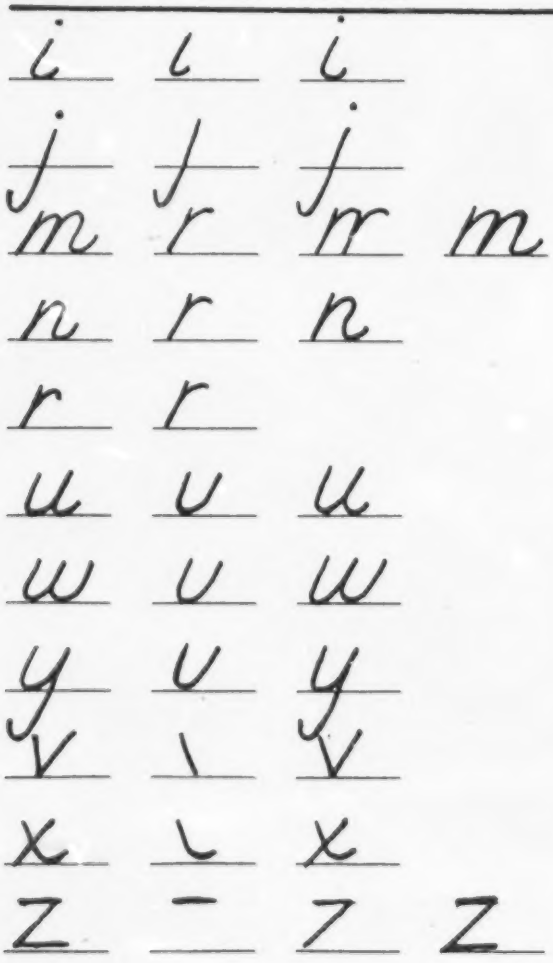
The following list shows step - by - step the starting point and formation of the D'Nealian letters. It is important that youngsters learn where to start when forming a letter. Pencils should not be lifted from the paper except to dot the "i" and "j" and cross the "t".



THESE LETTERS HAVE ALMOST THE SAME STARTING POINT AND BEGINNING STROKE.



THESE TALL, TWO SPACE LETTERS ARE PRESENTED AFTER A, C, D, E, G, O, Q, S. THEY HAVE THE SAME STARTING POINT AND THE SAME BEGINNING STROKE EXCEPT "f". LETTER "t" IS MADE A FULL DOUBLE SPACE.



THESE LETTERS ARE STARTED WITH A DOWNWARD STROKE AND HAVE THE SAME STARTING POINT. SEE PAGE 13 AND 14.

All letters are presented for learning and writing practice in groups of three. Three letters gives the learner (and teacher) an adequate reference span to see if the letters are being made correctly. It should never take more than a few groups of three before he can consistently make a grouping in which all letters are about similarly made. At this point, the child has reached a plateau with the skills he has for making this letter.

Letter "a" is the first letter taught. Significant care is taken here to be certain this letter is properly made. This is because the beginning stroking for "a" is followed when forming the other seven letters in this grouping. The importance of getting this first letter done right; so it looks like an "a", is about the size of an "a" and is repeatedly done in a consistant manner by each individual, cannot be over emphasized.

Letter "d" is presented next. It is pointed out to children that the "d" without the up-high stem or part looks exactly like the "a" and is made in a similar fashion. As quick as the learner can do a grouping of three "d's" to the best of his ability, the word "dad" is taught. With introducing "dad", letter spacing to form words begins. Teacher illustrations on the board show that letters do not touch one another nor are they spread across the paper.

Letters c, o, e, g, s, and q are then introduced. Letter "c" before "e" because the "c" is half the making of letter "e". Again it should be stressed the making of an acceptable "a" is critical to making all letters in this grouping. Letter "q" is down-played at this time. This is to give the child learning time to positively learn letter "g" as these two could be possible reversals. Also "q" is not needed as frequently as "g", therefore we introduce it but then let it be for a while.

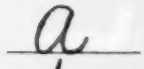
From this point on penmanship and beginning reading via writing words are never separated. It is now by writing words, which by their construction are done left to right, that left to right eye movement, which is so essential for beginning reading, develops. Also, a basic vocabulary now starts to build and the skills of reading and writing now work together to reinforce the other to "maximize" learning potential.

A good technique to use until the child has mastered writing all letters is to allow no erasing. This is done so that the child has a ready reference to what his mistakes are. If he erases he'll have nothing to compare his correct letters with. Also time is wasted as small children tend to erase long and hard. This often results in a hole in the paper. When this happens a child may then feel bad because he has made an error with his letter, made a mess when erasing and perhaps has made a hole in his paper. It is best to tell children to draw a line through the letter he made wrong and try to make it correct. As a letter is introduced, it is beneficial to have the children trace the letter, with their finger. in the air, on the desk top or back of their hand while having them repeat the audio directions.

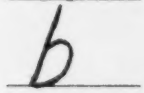
For sureness in forming and particularly as a help in recognition of the tall letters, the b, f, h, k, l, and t are given first preference in presenting this group to the children. The presentation of the manuscript letters a, c, d, e, g, q, o, s and then b, f, h, k, l and t will give the students enough symbols to write many of their basic vocabulary words early in their writing experiences. Since the main purpose of writing is communication, the sooner a child writes whole words and then sentences, the more appealing and meaingful penmanship lessons become. It should be noted that letter "t" is made as tall as the other tall double-spaced letters. There is no rationale to support teaching six large letters double-spaced and then making only, the seventh, letter "t" a three-quarter-sized letter.

In the beginning, it was stated that the teacher will need to make changes. This is necessary to utilize to the utmost what the child can contribute to successful writing through his individuality. We mentioned three changes in D'Nealian letter formation to bring this about: First, a continuous stroke to form a letter; second, establishment of rhythm necessary to write easily; and third, a consistent slant that is comfortable to the child. These changes apply only to the formation of individual letters.

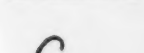
The following is a suggested audio phraseology of how each letter is formed. The teacher in showing and telling letter structure uses voice inflection to help establish rhythm. It may be necessary to add or delete some of the suggested vocabulary to suit the individual teacher's vocabulary usage.



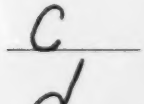
around, down, up, down and a monkey tail.



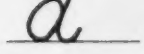
high start, down, up, around into a tummy.



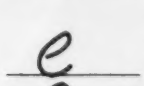
around, down, up and stop.



around, down up high, down, and a monkey tail.

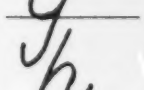


curved line, around down, up and stop.

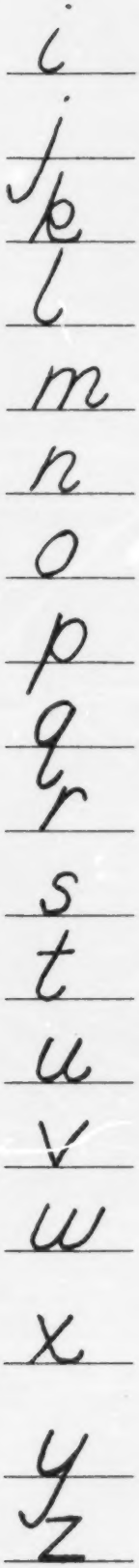


curved high start, up, around down, back up to middle and across (Use candy cane as a reference to show difference between "f" and "t").

around, down, up down and a fish hook under water.



high start down, up and a hump with a monkey tail.



make a one and a monkey tail, dot the one

like an "i" and a fish hook under water

high start down, up, small tummy and a monkey tail

high start down and a monkey tail

down, up, hump hump and a monkey tail

down, up, hump and a monkey tail

around down, close up around

down under water, up around and a tummy

around, down up, down and a backwards fish hook under water

down, up and a roof

around down and a snake tail

high start down, make a monkey tail and cross

down, over up, down, and a monkey tail

slant down, slant up

down, over, up, down, over, up. Like two u's without a monkey tail. (Also good, "make a double - "u".)

slant down, up to middle, make an arm and finish with a monkey tail

down, over, up; straight down under water and a fish hook

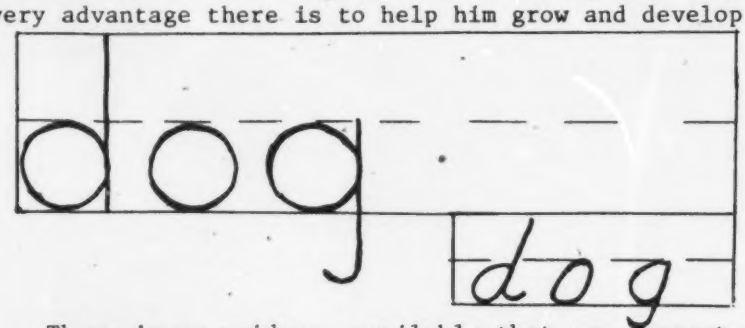
over, slant down and over

MECHANICS OF WRITING

The next change involves putting the symbols together in words and sentence formation. Again, we point to the purpose of writing, which can essentially be stated as "communication". Letters are formed with definite size, but not a predetermined size. We do not insist on double space-size letters such as the one inch sized beginning print a child is forced to use when he is given typical grade one manuscript paper. Children using D'Nealian begin on what is commercially sold as grade three paper. That is paper with a one-half inch spacing with a quarter inch light or dotted spacer line.

FOR KINDERGARTEN USE ONLY -

Unlined paper could be used in Kindergarten to start with. Most teachers begin some writing towards the midpoint of the Kindergarten year. After a child has learned to make letters it is wise to switch to 3/4 inch ruled penmanship paper. This is done to help the child achieve legible writing. With unlined paper, the letters are all sizes, and tend to run up and down as the child writes, making it difficult for him to read what he has written. It is the good teacher that gives the learner every advantage there is to help him grow and develop.



Grade 1 Paper

Grade 111 Paper

There is no evidence available that can support starting with one inch letters in grade one, then three quarter inch letters in grade two (due to the size of spacing found on grade two paper) and finally to grade three paper with half inch lines. There is little skill progression when all children are forced to use one inch letters for one year and then begin to work down towards what will be in most cases a sized print that the child could have started with in the beginning.

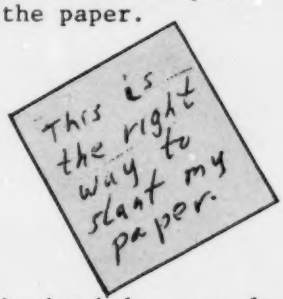
With D'Nealian manuscript we let the individual establish a comfortable size manuscript print keeping in mind legibility. Children are encouraged to write not too large nor too small. We explain how giant letters take too much room and small letters are hard to read. We let them find a size that is of their liking and then make sure they stick to a continuous sized pattern. As with the slant of letters, where we insist on one direction slant for legibility, we also insist on one size for legibility.

Spacing of letters in a word or words in a sentence is easy to establish. The teacher needs only to put such an illustration as this, on the board occasionally to show nonlegibility, because of poor spacing or size. (Illustration - next page.)

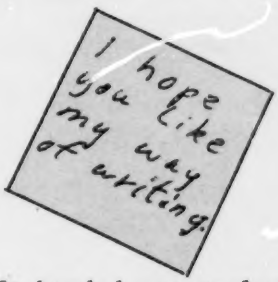
I see the cat -vs- I see the cat

The posture of children during penmanship training should be the same good posture we strive t maintain for healthy bodily growth. A child slumping over at his desk, leaning on his forearms, or sitting on his tailbone, cannot do his best work. Sitting tall, with both feet on the floor and arms relaxed on the desk, is recommended at all times. Proper seat and desk height is also important. An alert teacher, or principal, will check through the year to change seating heights to fit children's growth.

The position of the paper on the desk is slanted approximately at the 2 o'clock position for left-handed children and 10 o'clock position for the right-handed children. In this manner, the arm meets the paper in such a position that the hand is parrallel to the lines on the paper.



Right-handed paper slant



left-handed paper slant

Left-handed children follow the same instructions given to right-handed children. They may, however, tend to bend the hand around toward the body in writing. If they turn the hand in and do acceptable word, then you wouldn't try to change this pattern. Remember the individuality in writing!!

The pencil is placed on the side of the middle finger at the cutical position. The first finger is placed near the top of the sharpened edge of the pencil, while the thumb presses the pencil and holds it to the fingers. For comfortable writing, we instruct the child to hold the pencil firmly, but not too tightly.

The author feels that it is inappropriate to give the child a large sized pencil for beginning writing at school knowing that he will normally find small sized pencils at home. Most preschoolers have been maneuvering for a year and a half or so, a small sized pencil in order to express their desires in the writing and drawing areas. With this in mind, it is not consistent to force on children in early writing a large, fat so-called "beginning pencil". Large primary pencils are not necessary for beginning penmanship instruction and if anything, tend to feel foreign to the hand.

In a study made by the author on hand size in relation to pencil size the following facts developed. The average adult has a hand size two to two and one-half times larger than an average first graders hand. In order to determine what size primary pencil an adult, learning to write, would use, the primary pencil size was enlarged two and one-half times. This resulted in a pencil as large in diameter as a broom stick!!

Remember since about age two and a half a child has been using a regular sized pencil as these are the kind used at home. He then comes to school at age five and is forced to use the "large fat primary pencil." But, again he goes home to find regular sized pencils to use. There is no supportive data in any educational studies to justify using such instruments.

This massive oversized pencil certainly cannot lend much to the fine art of writing.

Educators, of course, know there may be exceptions. A child may need a larger pencil due to some muscular growth not normally established, but to say that <u>all</u> children, beginning to write, need such a tool is erronious.

It will be necessary as penmanship instruction is given, to move about the room quite often at the beginning to be sure the children are following instructions. Good results have been obtained where two classes, if room permits, begin instruction together, letting one teacher illustrate from the board, while the other moves about the classroom to aid children where needed. Another method here would be the use of a teacher aide or para-professional. The rationale for the second person is the inability of the teacher to present at the board and at the same time get around fast enough to check 25 or 30 children as they practice each new letter. As the group progresses, less time is spent watching those who have achieved the desired results, and more time is spent with the others. When a significant number of children are making satisfactory progress, the group is split between the two teachers and the groups progress then according to their abilities. At the beginning of this type of arrangement there is one whole group working toward a desired end. As time progresses, the group that has mastered what is being presented will tend to form the largest group.

This group can be handled easily by one teacher in polishing their penmanship skills. The few who still need more detailed instruction or time to develop, would be handled by the other teacher or teacher aide.

MANUSCRIPT CAPITAL LETTERS INTRODUCED

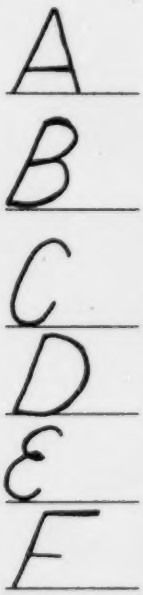
Capital letters are easily learned by children and are practically self-taught. There are two reasons for this. The first being there are eleven capital letters that are closely related in looks to their lower case counterpart and many are made exactly alike. The second is that children have high motivation for making capitals as they need them in their newly developed writing skills and related language arts work. By delaying the teaching of capitals until the small letters are mastered, the child will make many of his own capital-letter-small letter associations, thus easing the instruction of teaching capital letters. Because of this the teacher should stress lower case letters in beginning penmanship and de-emphasize the capital letters. This helps get the children writing with a minimum involvement of capital and lower case manuscript symbols.

The teacher should use an approximate period of time from September to Christmas to perfect lower case manuscript letters. After this more effort is put on capital letters.

As in the small letter construction, all capital letters are made using the continuous stroke method. Chart two illustrates how capitals are made.

Special note should be made here that some teachers may want to change some capital letters to fit their interpretations or feelings. The author has attempted to use a block letter script that has general useage and commonality to what children most often see.

CHART 2 -



A — Slant down, up on same line, slant down and up to middle and across

B — Slant down, up on same line, around halfway, around again

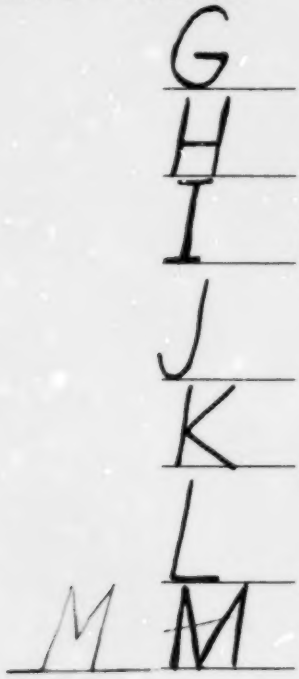
C — Around down and stop

D — Slant down, up on same line and around

E — Around halfway, around again (backwards three)

F — Straight over, backward, slant down, up to the middle and across

CHART 2 - CONTINUED



G — Around down, up back and across

H — Slant down, up halfway, across, up, then down

I — Slant over, back to middle, slant down, over and back

J — Slant down and a fish hook on the line

K — Slant down, up halfway, slant up, back on same line, slant down

L — Slant down and across

M — Slant down up same line, slant down halfway, slant up, slant down

"M" is made to the midpoint to allow maximum visual difference between "M" and "N".

N — Slant down, up same line, slant down, slant up

O — Around down close up

P — Slant down, up same line and small tumble over

Q — Around, down, up, around. Add a tail.

R — Slant down up same line, around halfway, slant down.

S — Make a snake

T — Top line across, back to middle slant down

U — Slant down, over up high

V — Slant down to point, slant up

CHART 2 - CONTINUED

Make two "V's"

Make a large x

Make a small "v" and down straight

Line across, slant down line across

Children usually start school highly motivated with the expectation of learning to read and write. This desire has been built up for a long time. The sooner the child can begin to fulfill this expectation, the happier he will be, and the more meaningful reading and writing becomes. Though not statistically proven, teachers recognize the high degree of correlation between reading and writing. The author has found through years of teaching primary grade children, the sooner a child can write legibly, the quicker he becomes a competent reader. Also, that by utilizing more fully what the child can contribute to writing, the quicker he will write.

The key points in using D'Nealian is to get children writing with a continuous stroke print rather than component parts and to treat penmanship as a progressively developed individualized skill. There is no need to repeat page after page after page of drill work in letter formation in trying to get all children to write alike.

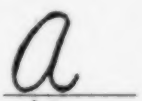
Gone should be the necessity of tediously following prescribed penmanship patterns that in reality only a machine could duplicate.

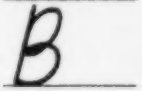
CURSIVE CAPITAL LETTERS

There are many types of cursive capital letters used today. Because of this, it is nearly impossible to pick one to fit everyones taste. For this reason, it is the authors' intention to make all cursive capitals closely resemble manuscript lower or upper case letters.

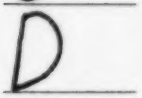
D'Nealian cursive capitals are made with a continuous stroke where possible, remembering legibility, size, and spacing as key points to easily read letters.

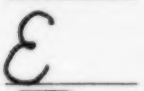
Students are cautioned to keep all letters at the beginning stage simply made and clean. Loops, fancy curved or straight run on or off lines are discouraged. Later, as the child develops the required neatness size, and spacing, the teacher, if desired can introduce ways to add flourishing beginning or ending strokes.

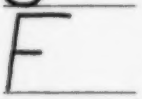

like lower case manuscript a

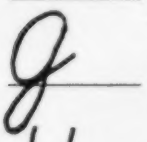

like upper case manuscript B

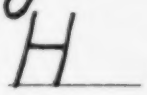
like upper case manuscript C

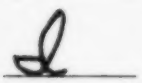

like upper case manuscript D

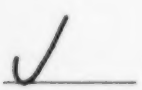

like upper case manuscript E


like upper case manuscript F


like lower case cursive g, but with larger tummy


like upper case manuscript H


small upward stroke to left and finish like a lower case cursive l.


like upper case manuscript J

CURSIVE CAPITAL LETTERS - CONTINUED

like upper case manuscript K

like upper case manuscript L

like lower case manuscript m

like lower case manuscript n

like upper case manuscript O

like upper case manuscript P

like upper case manuscript Q

like upper case manuscript R

like upper case manuscript S

like upper case manuscript T

like lower case cursive u

like upper case manuscript V

like lower case manuscript w

like lower case manuscript x

like lower case cursive "y" but with larger upper part

like upper case manuscript Z